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ABSTRACT

Because of a perceived lack in the development and use of evaluation procedures for vocational education in Illinois, a new evaluation system was begun in 1984. It required that at least 20 percent of funded vocational programs be evaluated annually, in compliance with requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. The evaluation system provides for the assessment of indicators of program quality, efficiency, and expanded student opportunities. The identified indicators include placement, enrollment, employer satisfaction, student satisfaction, student performance, program cost, and objective labor market justification. In the new evaluation system, it is the responsibility of local personnel to conduct self-evaluations, analyzing information pertinent to the indicators and determining whether accepted standards are met in their programs. The Illinois Council on Vocational Education made two recommendations pursuant to the vocational education evaluation system: (1) implement an evaluation system that has the potential to provide high quality education for employment programs to assist in preparing and maintaining the work force; and (2) include in the State Board of Education's annual report the outcome of student successes in vocational education. (KC)

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Evaluating Vocational Education Programs in Illinois

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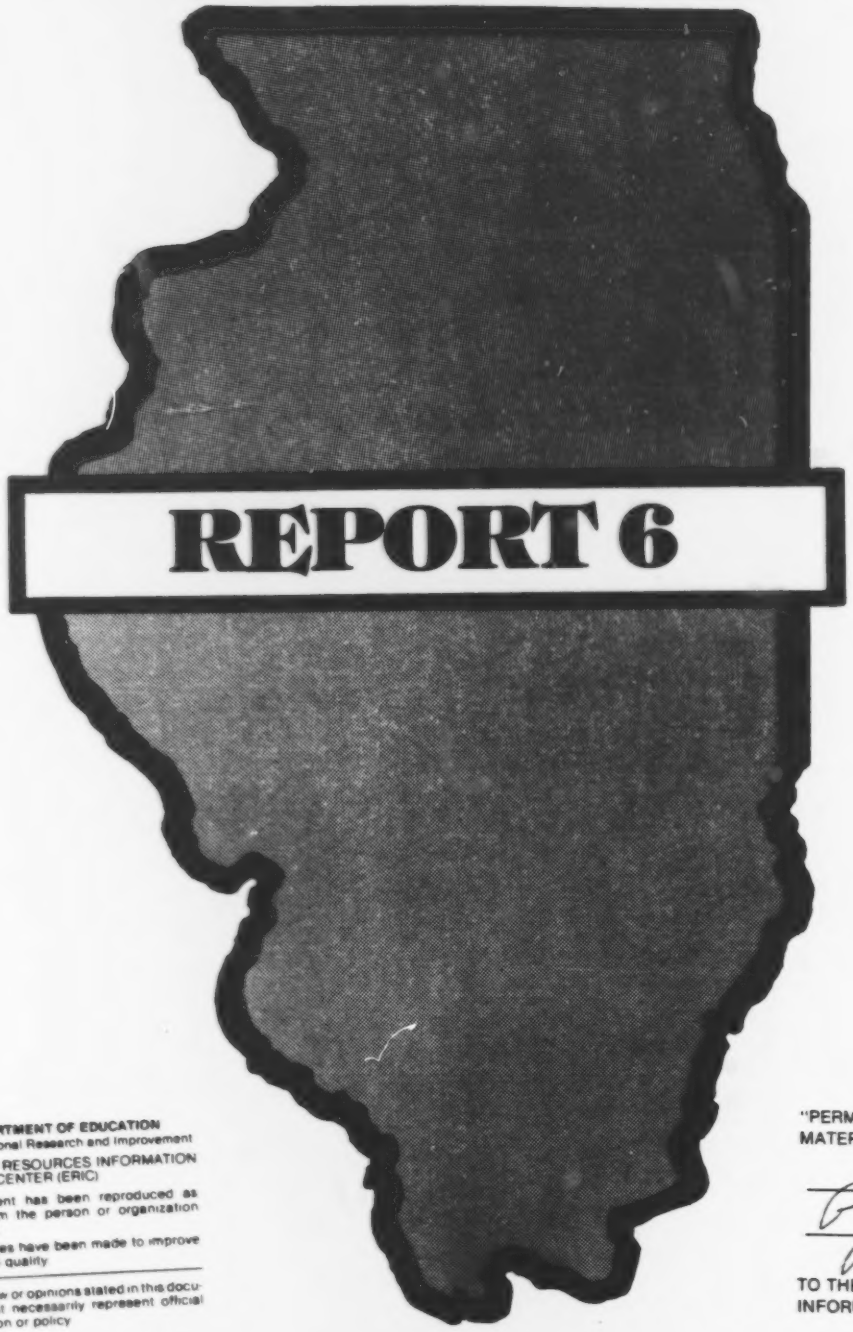

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1987-1988

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DATE: March 8, 1989

TO: Governor James R. Thompson
Lauro Cavazos, Secretary of Education
Elizabeth Dole, Secretary of Labor
Illinois State Board of Education
Illinois Job Training Coordinating Council

The Illinois Council on Vocational Education is pleased to submit its report on the Illinois State Board of Education's plan for evaluation of the local vocational programs in Illinois. Although the development of the evaluation system is not totally operational, ICoVE feels that upon its completion, Illinois will continue to be recognized as a leader in the development and implementation of an innovative evaluation system for vocational education.

ICoVE has assumed an active role in a consultant capacity in the development of the system. ICoVE members and staff have provided recommendations and technical assistance. One education representative on ICoVE participated in pilot testing some of the evaluation materials being developed and presentations have been made by the director of the project developing the system.

In our recommendations we have stressed that the Illinois State Board of Education must have an evaluation program in place which assists local districts improve their delivery system for vocational education and one which will address educations responsibilities for preparing a quality workforce in Illinois.

We commend the Illinois State Board on its forethought and plans for an evaluation system which is more than a compliance document for state and federal use.

It's heartening to see an evaluation system being developed for improvement purposes rather than something that is simply a test.

Sincerely,

Hartzel L. Black

Hartzel Black

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REPORT 6

EVALUATING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN ILLINOIS

A Report on
Consultation of the Illinois Council on Vocational Education
with the Illinois State Board of Education
on Evaluation

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1987-1988

CONTENTS

Preface v

EVALUATION FOR IMPROVEMENT 1
History of Evaluation in Illinois 1
The Three-Phase Evaluation System. . . . 1
Outcomes of the Three-Phase Evaluation . 2
New Directions. 2
A New Policy 2
A New Evaluation System. 3

Council Consultation. 4

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED ACTIONS. 5

Resources. 7

ICoVE Membership

PREFACE

The Illinois Council on Vocational Education is charged with the responsibility of providing consultation to the Illinois State Board of Education in the development of the evaluation system to be used in the state. This report provides an overview of the State's evaluation process and ICoVE's involvement. The Perkins Act requires:

> ***Each State council shall--***
> ***furnish consultation to the State board on the establishment of evaluation criteria for vocational education programs within the state. [Section 112(d)(4)]***

The State Board, as required in Section 111(a)(1)(c) shall include "consultation with the State council . . . in the . . . evaluation of programs funded under the Act." Section 113 (b)(9)(A) requires the State board to assure "that the State will develop measures for the effectiveness of programs assisted under this Act . . . including evaluative measurements such as–

> (i) the occupations to be trained for, which will reflect a realistic assessment of labor market needs of the State;
>
> (ii) the levels of skills to be achieved in particular occupations, which will reflect the hiring needs of employers; and
>
> (iii) the basic employment competencies to be used in performance outcomes, which will reflect the hiring needs of employers."

The State Board also must develop measures for evaluating the effectiveness of programs for the handicapped assisted under the Perkins Act. At least 20 percent of all eligible recipients must be evaluated annually.

HISTORY OF EVALUATION IN ILLINOIS

Evaluation has been an important part of federally funded vocational programs since the passage of the Vocational Education Act of 1963, with renewed emphasis in the subsequent amendments of 1968 and beyond. Initially, evaluation was conceived as a means for bringing about needed improvements in American education; later it evolved into an effort to determine whether positive changes had actually taken place and offerings were really cost-effective.

Illinois is recognized as an early leader in the development and implementation of an innovative evaluation system for vocational education. Many other states have followed its example, adopting and adapting components of the Illinois system for their own use.

The Three-Phase Evaluation System

In 1971-72 Illinois initiated the Three-Phase System for planning, implementation and evaluation of local occupational programs. The system consisted of a local planning phase; a review of the local plan by the state staff; and an on-site visitation by a team of outside educators, business and industrial representatives, and students. Team members were sent various documents for review in advance of their on-site visit:

- the district's local plan,
- the curriculum offerings,
- demographic data on the school and community,
- results of questionnaires administered to staff and students,
- team member training materials,, and
- student follow-up data.

On-site team members interviewed staff, students, employers, and significant persons connected with the program. The teams focused on eight areas of concern (later reduced to six):

- administrative organization,
- personnel,
- objectives,
- evaluation,
- occupational programs,
- resources utilized,
- guidance services, and
- students served.

At the conclusion of the on-site visit, team leaders presented their evaluation reports orally to local administrators and other concerned individuals in a summary conference. The written composite report--including conclusions, recommendations and suggested improvements--was also submitted to the State Board's Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education (DAVTE) to study and to make recommendations to the evaluated institution. The districts were then responsible for addressing recommendations in the report prior to the submission of their next vocational plans.

Outcomes of the Three-Phase Evaluation

A major finding of statewide evaluations between 1972 and 1975 was a serious lack in the development and utilization of evaluation procedures at the local level. It became apparent that local education agencies needed assistance in the techniques of self-evaluation. Moreover, the evidence suggested that teacher education programs needed to give greater emphasis to both pre-service and in-service evaluation instruction. To address this problem, a Locally Directed Evaluation (LDE) project was undertaken by DAVTE.

The LDE study sought to identify local needs; develop a practical evaluation strategy; devise selective, easy-to-follow activities; and field-test and disseminate materials and information on conducting local program evaluations. As a result, local districts have been able to individualize and conduct occupational program evaluations in terms appropriate to their settings and school situations. They could address particular problems and concerns identified by the on-site evaluation teams. The LDE project also produced materials and teaching aids for teacher educators to use in classroom instruction.

NEW DIRECTIONS

In 1982 the State Board of Education launched a policy study on Education for Employment. The study was prompted by recurring recommendations of the State Advisory Council on Vocational Education, a Governor's program proposal, ongoing State Board investigations, and the recognition of widespread societal changes taking place which had profound impact on both the schools and the labor market. The purpose of the Education for Employment policy study was to clarify the roles and responsibilities of state and local districts in preparing individuals for job entry and successful job performance. The study encompassed a range of program levels--vocational, employment and training, career, and adult education.

During the course of the study, representatives of the private sector and professional organizations provided advisory assistance, and researchers collected pertinent data on needs of Illinois youth and adults in preparation for employment. Preliminary findings of the policy study were compiled in a document, ***Future Directions, Education for Employment***, and distributed to various publics. The findings were then used as topics of discussion in more than 100 meetings held throughout the state.

A New Policy

In September 1983 the State Board of Education, responding to initial recommendations of the policy study, endorsed the formulation of a new policy statement on Education for Employment and the development of a regional delivery system for programs and services. A year later the new policy statement, ***A Policy and Administrative Plan for Education for Employment***, was presented for Board discussion and public comment. In December 1984 the State Board accepted conclusions of the policy study, as well as the new policy statement and administrative plan on Education for Employment, which replaced a previous statement on vocational education.

In brief, the policy study's basic conclusions were:

- The state program must promote the acquisition of general and attitudinal, as well as technical skills; the development of reading, writing, and computation abilities through a strong basic curriculum; and the strengthening of personal attributes of initiative, motivation, responsibility, and sense of self-worth.

- The state should establish a regional system including a consortia of high schools and area vocational centers with alliances to their respective community colleges.

- The state should support principles of quality, access and efficiency; in order for students to achieve an appropriate level of competence through a climate for positive change.

The new policy statement formally adopted by the State Board of Education spelled out specific responsibilities in the provision of Education for Employment:

- assurance that students will attain levels of achievement appropriate to their development and suitable for their immediate employment or continuing education;
- certainty that program access will be offered in a nondiscriminatory manner, using a regional secondary delivery system and the existing community college system;
- responsiveness to changes in the labor market and needs of students; and
- continuance of curriculum renewal, staff development, and equipment improvement.

In compliance with requirements of the Perkins Act, the Illinois State Board has continued to evaluate at least twenty percent of its funded vocational programs annually.

A New Evaluation System

The State Board concentrated on the services, programs and facilities available to special populations served through funds from Title IIA of the Carl Perkins Act. As the new Illinois Education for Employment plan was being implemented, a new evaluation system was developed through the collaboration of the State Board and the Community College Board. The macro evaluation system provides for the assessment of indicators of program quality, efficiency, and expanded student opportunities. The identified indicators include:

- placement,
- enrollment,
- employer satisfaction,
- student satisfaction,
- student performance,
- program cost, and
- objective labor market justification.

In the new evaluation system it is the responsibility of local personnel to conduct self-evaluations, analyzing information pertinent to the indicators and determining whether accepted standards are met in their programs.

Depending upon their conclusions, a follow-up, in-depth analysis will be conducted to identify causes of problems and/or plans for continued program improvement. DAVTE will use the self-evaluation data in making decisions on program approval and needed program improvement.

The local self-evaluation process is the first part of a large macro-evaluation system which also includes audits of funds received, followed by on-site visits of selected teams of evaluators. The teams are expected to verify program improvement plans, evaluate the effectiveness of aspects of the total programs (administration, student services, JTPA coordination, advisory councils, etc.), and assess services to special needs populations.

Illinois Community College Board. A comprehensive program evaluation system was implemented by the ICCB in 1983. The system requires local community colleges to develop a systematic college-wide program review process. The process evaluates each instructional program and the support services provided by the community college. Considerable latitude to the colleges was granted by the Board, but all components of the designed system must be carried out during a five year cycle.

The ICCB and ISBE staff have been working to develop a joint program review of the vocational education programs which will address the required needs of the federally-funded vocational education program evaluation and continue to meet the needs of the higher education community.

During the first 5-year cycle, community colleges reviewed 7,402 instructional programs and 575 support services. The system identified 279 programs, of which 190 were vocational education/occupational programs, which needed to be discontinued or phased out; 169 programs have been actually withdrawn. An additional 707 programs were classified as needing "continued review."

Reasons given for the discontinuation of occupational programs include such rationale as: shifts in manpower demands, low enrollments, technological shifts in professions, lack of faculty resource, and excessively high costs when compared to the overall mission and objectives of the college.

In addition, the Illinois Board of Higher Education and ICCB select certain programs each year for statewide review. The IBHE has statutory responsibility, "to review periodically existing programs of instruction . . . and to advise the appropriate board of control if the contribution of each program is not educationally or economically justified." Many occupational programs are also reviewed by their respective licensing boards.

Follow-up information providing data about occupational program participants and leavers will be available beginning in 1990. The information will be useful

for statewide planning and coordination, as at the local level for program review and evaluation.

COUNCIL CONSULTATION

The Illinois Council on Vocational Education, as well as its predecessor, the State Advisory Council on Adult, Vocational and Technical Education (SACVE) assumed an active role in the Three-Phase Evaluation system. Members participated in on-site visitations and as team leaders for the process. In addition, the council reviewed evaluation reports of eligible recipients and the state composite report as part of its evaluation process.

Likewise, ICoVE assumed an active role during the policy study, participating with advisory groups and providing information to the State Board. As the State Board began to identify the indicators of program quality, ICoVE participated in the process.

ICoVE incorporated the indicators of program quality into its handbook for private-sector involvement, "The Advisory Council Handbook: Building and Improving Education for Employment Partnerships in Illinois." Regional and local advisory groups are advised to incorporate the concepts into program evaluations.

Members of the State Board's staff of DAVTE have provided the Council with progress being made in development of the State's new system. One educational representative on ICoVE participated in pilot testing some of the evaluation materials being developed. Feedback was given from ICoVE to the State Board.

Special presentations have been made to ICoVE by the director of the project developing the new system. Members of the Council discussed concerns and provided input.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED ACTIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Illinois Council on Vocational Education recommends the following actions, pursuant to the Education for Employment evaluation system, be taken by the Illinois State Board of Education:

- Implement an evaluation system which has the potential to provide quality education for employment programs to assist in preparing and maintaining a quality workforce.

- Include in the State Board's Annual Report Card the outcome of student successes in vocational education by indicating the percent of the graduates gaining employment in the occupational field of preparation, the average wage at initial employment, follow-up of employment retention, and the number in the current workforce who receive retraining, upgrading, or new job skills for retaining employment, advancing in employment, or meeting workforce needs.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

The Illinois Council on Vocational Education suggests that in order for the Illinois Education for Employment evaluation process to become effective and fulfill its objectives, it should address the following:

- A philosophy promoting evaluation systems designed to be used at the local level for self-improvement should be favored over one that emphasizes federal/state mandates.

- To ensure the integrity of the new system, checks and balances will have to be provided to verify the accuracy of "indicator" information collected and analyzed by secondary regional system and community college personnel.

- The new evaluation system should be designed to address all federal/state requirements (ISBE/DAVTE, ICCB, and IBHE) for evaluating vocational programs at community colleges.

- The evaluation system and its ultimate effect on state and local program improvement should be closely linked with other State Board services, e.g., program improvement projects, training alternative programs.

- The system should be a measureable outcome of student performance in successfully obtaining and maintaining a job in the field for which the occupational preparation was provided.

- The evaluation system should be easy to implement and conduct and take a minimal amount of time.

- A system to train regional system, community college, university, and state agency personnel should become part of the process for effective use of the evaluation system.

In addition to the recommendations and suggested actions for evaluating local programs, ICoVE encourages the State Board of Education to establish an internal evaluation system which would address its plan for Education for Employment.

RESOURCES

Illinois State Board of Education. Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education. ***The Three-Phase Statewide Evaluation System of Vocational Education Programs, Local Plan for Vocational Education.*** Springfield, IL. September 1983.

------***The New Evaluation Process for Education for Employment Programs, A Summary.*** Springfield, IL. 1987.

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